

EMERSON APPLAUDS U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS DECISION TO APPEAL WATER QUALITY CERTIFICATION FOR ST. JOHN'S BAYOU-NEW MADRID FLOODWAY PROJECT

Appeals Decision to Missouri Clean Water Commission

(WASHINGTON, DC) Today (12/10/2002), U.S. Representative Jo Ann Emerson (MO-08), applauded the decision of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) to appeal the Missouri Clean Water Commission in response to the denial by the Missouri Department of Natural Resources of a Section 401 Water Quality Certification for the St. John's Bayou-New Madrid Floodway Project.

"This project has been on the drawing board for 50 plus years," said Emerson. "However, despite our best efforts to design a plan that strikes a balance between people and the environment, this decision has put the politics of the environmental elitists ahead of the personal safety and prosperity of those who live and work along the river. This is simply unacceptable and that is why we must do whatever is necessary to ensure the completion of this project."

The appeal challenges the denial on the grounds that the project fully complies with Missouri water quality standards, and all other water quality standards required by Federal law. The appeal also allows the Corps to make its case for water quality certification with a hearing before the Missouri Clean Water Commission.

The St. John's Bayou-New Madrid Floodway Project represents an intense effort to address environmental concerns, while also reducing personal and economic suffering caused by frequent flooding on the lower Mississippi River. Working closely with local, state and Federal agencies, several innovative measures were added to address concerns regarding the environment including:

- Establishing a connection between the Mississippi River and the New Madrid Floodway during the critical spring fish reproductive period. Opening flood control gates until mid-May will make the connection possible. The gate management approach will also allow for the inundation of up to 2,000 more acres of forested wetlands and low elevation croplands in the lower Floodway than previous designs, thereby reducing impacts to wetlands and fish.
- Implementing a mitigation plan to reforest 8,375 acres -- more than doubling the amount of bottomland hardwoods in the project area. These

- reforested lands will also increase wildlife habitat and provide important wetland functions for the region's overall ecology.
- Construction of measures to provide water to the Park to mimic historic flooding and thus preserve its existing bottomland hardwoods while aiding in the reproduction of native tree species.

In closing Emerson added, "This project will grant the citizens of Southeast Missouri advantages that many in urban areas take for granted and give them simple things like protection from flooding, protection of their property from damage and the ability to work and raise their families in a safe environment, secure from the ravages of floods and disease. I look forward to working closely with the Commission to move this project forward."

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